

TUES 21ST FEB 78 v WOKING (IL) AWAY DREW 1-1



PETER SPITTLE
... head injury.

WYCOMBE SO LUCKY TO DRAW

PLAYING their first Isthmian League game since January 7, Wycombe Wanderers were fortunate to return from Woking with a point from Tuesday night's encounter at Kingfield. The Blues seemed woefully out of touch and were found wanting in both skill and determination on a damp and foggy night.

Fog made playing and spectating difficult throughout a dull match, and although the pitch was in as good a condition as could have been expected after the recent bad weather, Wycombe's performance was, at best, less than adequate. With the exception of Peter Spittle in goal and John Priestley in midfield, the players looked as manager John Reardon said later, "as though they haven't played for weeks".

The back four for Wycombe did their job, but the midfield trio constantly lost out to former Wanderers men Derek Cotterell and Dave Alexander. With the sole exception of a shot onto the bar after 21 minutes from Dylan Evans, the striking force looked totally impotent, and there is no record of a single shot at goal from the frontrunners for the whole of the second half.

The first 25 minutes of this game produced the best that Wanderers had to offer on the night, and even this was poor. For the first quarter of an hour it seemed as though things were going to continue as they had left off at Slough earlier in the Blues previous game — pressure from Wycombe down the right instigated by Paul Birdseye. But this was not to be, and by the half-time whistle, although a goal down, Woking were well on top.

A thoroughly outstanding performance from Cottrell in midfield, well supported by Alexander nullified anything that a shiftless Wycombe attack had to offer. Behind Woking's midfield, Paul Daniels in the No. 2 shirt was impassable in defence, and

Woking 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

dangerous in attack. Malcolm Whatford and Ian McGonagle were seldom stretched, and Frank Parsons in goal had a gentle night.

Alexander and Morton both had shots well saved, and in the 30th minute Wycombe's troubles doubled with a severe injury to Spittle. The Blues' keeper parried a long hard shot from Roberts, and in going down to recover the ball met an oncoming striker's foot with his head. Lengthy treatment on the pitch was followed by Spittle coming off in some distress with his head swathed in bandage.

For the remainder of the first

half Bobby Davies wore the goalkeeper's jersey, and John Priestley dropped into the back four.

It is often surprising that when a side is faced with a ten man opposition it fails to press home its obvious advantage, and this was the case with Woking. Only one shot from McGonagle, which grazed the bar, could have troubled Davies, and until the 42nd minute of the half the sides seemed more evenly balanced.

After 42 minutes, Priestley made a solo run down the left flank deep into the Woking 18 yard area where he was pulled down by the Woking goalkeeper.

Home at last

PETER Spittle, who needed stitches in a head wound sustained against Woking on Tuesday, should be fit to face Tilbury tomorrow (Saturday) when Wycombe Wanderers stage their first home Isthmian League game since December 3.

Spittle was off the field for some 20 minutes at Woking but bravely returned for the second half. He went to hospital after the game to be stitched.

Wanderers, disappointed at dropping two points on Tuesday, will be confident of a winning return to Loakes Park after beating Tilbury 3-2 back in October. Cup matches and the weather have kept Wycombe fans waiting a ridiculously long time to see their team in action on home territory. In case they've forgotten where the ground is, we've put in a map (see right) to remind them!

Team-wise, the Essex side have several changes in the team

which lost to the Blues. The defence is the same but Ken Wigley and Steve Civity have come into midfield and Martin Binks up front.

Car parking tomorrow is likely to be difficult due to the National Women's Cross Country Championships, which are taking place in Hughenden.

On Tuesday Wanderers are at home to Maidenhead United in the second round of the Hitachi Isthmian League Cup (7.30 pm).

£1,000 richer

SOMEONE will be £1,000 richer on Saturday evening when the first jackpot prize from the Wycombe Wanderers Clubhouse Lottery will be drawn. Miss Midweek, Caroline Moore, will make the draw in the clubroom. Tickets, priced 25p, are on sale for next month's lottery in newsagents and pubs in the area.

EXPRESS COMING

DETROIT EXPRESS, currently staying at Bisham Abbey, make their first-ever public appearance on Wednesday when they meet Wycombe Wanderers at Loakes Park in a friendly (7.30 pm). Detroit, a completely new club, are in this country to get into trim before starting their North America Soccer League programme for the first time.

Jimmy Hill is one of the senior owners of the club while former Watford and Sheffield Utd manager, Ken Furphy, is chief coach. Among the best known players in the Detroit squad are Leicester striker Steve Earle and Newcastle defender Graham Oates. So far Express have drawn 2-2 with Reading, and beaten Luton 4-0 and Coventry 2-1. All these have been behind closed doors but on Wednesday, Detroit Express make their public debut.

Howard Kennedy sent Parsons the wrong way and fired home a knee-high shot.

A half-time 1-0 scoreline in favour of Wycombe was unjust, but gratefully received by a Wanderers side that was dismally out of touch.

The second half opened with the return of Spittle, courageously continuing in goal, to face unending Woking pressure that was to continue for the remainder of the game.

For the first half an hour after the resumption Cottrell — the undoubted man of the match — not only took the Wanderers on by himself, but together with Alexander stretched Spittle, on several occasions. After 55 minutes a foul by Alan Phillips on Alexander gave the home side a free kick on the edge of the box. Eight Wycombe men plus Morton formed a massive wall, only to see Cottrell's swerving shot go just over.

From a corner on the right, Cottrell was finally rewarded with a ball dropping at his feet from a corner on the right, to give Spittle no chance with a fine equaliser high into the net.

A minute later, Tony Horseman and Alick Brown were substituted by Derek Harris and Roger Steer, respectively but the pattern remained the same — Woking attacking hard, but somehow failing to put the ball in the net while Wanderers managed only isolated and weak forays into the home half.

In desperation after half an hour, Birdseye went just wide from long range, and a corner on the left for Wycombe was cleared off the line by McGonagle. The final quarter of an hour was a nightmare for the Blues defence, and Spittle twice had to punch clear.

This was a dreadful performance from Wanderers and yet another game that underlined inability in attack and lethargy in midfield. John Priestley alone worked hard and skilfully, only to see frontrunners squander chances offered.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, B. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Priestley, G. Mackenzie, M. Hollifield, A. Horseman (Sub Harris 72 mins), H. Kennedy, D. Evans.

WOKING: F. Parsons, P. Daniels, I. McGonagle, M. Preston, M. Whatford, D. Cottrell, D. Alexander, A. Brown (sub: Steer 72 mins), A. Morton, D. Roberts, A. Turner.

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorers:** Kennedy (42 mins Pen), Cottrell (71 mins).